

## Section

# 2

# Egypt's Old Kingdom

## Guide to Reading

### Looking Back, Looking Ahead

In Section 1, you learned that Egyptian dynasties are divided into the Old Kingdom, Middle Kingdom, and New Kingdom. In Section 2, you will learn about the Egyptians' leaders, religion, and way of life in the Old Kingdom.

### Focusing on the **Main Ideas**

- Egypt was ruled by all-powerful pharaohs. (page 166)
- The Egyptians believed in many gods and goddesses and in life after death for the pharaohs. (page 167)
- The Egyptians of the Old Kingdom built huge stone pyramids as tombs for their pharaohs. (page 168)

### Locating Places

Giza (GEE•zuh)

### Meeting People

King Khufu (KOO•foo)

### Content Vocabulary

pharaoh (FEHR•oh)

deity (DEE•uh•tee)

embalming (ihm•BAHM•ihng)

mummy (MUH•mee)

pyramid (PIHR•uh•MIHD)

### Academic Vocabulary

period (PIHR•ee•uhd)

welfare (WEHL•FAR)

structure (STRUHK•chuh)

principle (PRIHN•suh•puhl)

### Reading Strategy

**Organizing Information** Use a graphic organizer like the one below to identify the different beliefs in Egypt's religion.

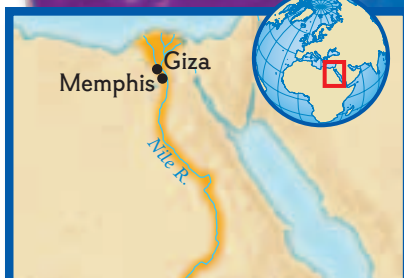


### History Social Science Standards

**WH.6.2** Students analyze the geographic, political, economic, religious, and social structures of the early civilizations of Mesopotamia, Egypt, and Kush.

NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC

## Where & When?



2600 B.C.

c. 2600 B.C.  
Old Kingdom period begins

2400 B.C.

c. 2540 B.C.  
Great Pyramid at Giza built

2200 B.C.

c. 2300 B.C.  
Old Kingdom declines



## Old Kingdom Rulers

**Main Idea** Egypt was ruled by all-powerful pharaohs.

**Reading Connection** Would you want your student body president or your sports team captain to have unlimited power? Think what it would be like to have such a leader as you read about the rulers of ancient Egypt.

Around 2600 B.C., the **period** known as the Old Kingdom began in Egypt. The Old Kingdom lasted until about 2300 B.C. During those years, Egypt grew and prospered. The Egyptians built cities, expanded trade, and established a strong government.

The Egyptian kings, or **pharaohs** (FEHR•ohs) as they were called, lived with their families in grand palaces. In fact, the word *pharaoh* originally meant “great house.” The pharaoh was an all-powerful ruler who guided Egypt’s every activity. His word was law, and it had to be obeyed without question.

Pharaohs appointed many officials to carry out their wishes. These officials saw to it that irrigation canals and grain storehouses were built and repaired. They made

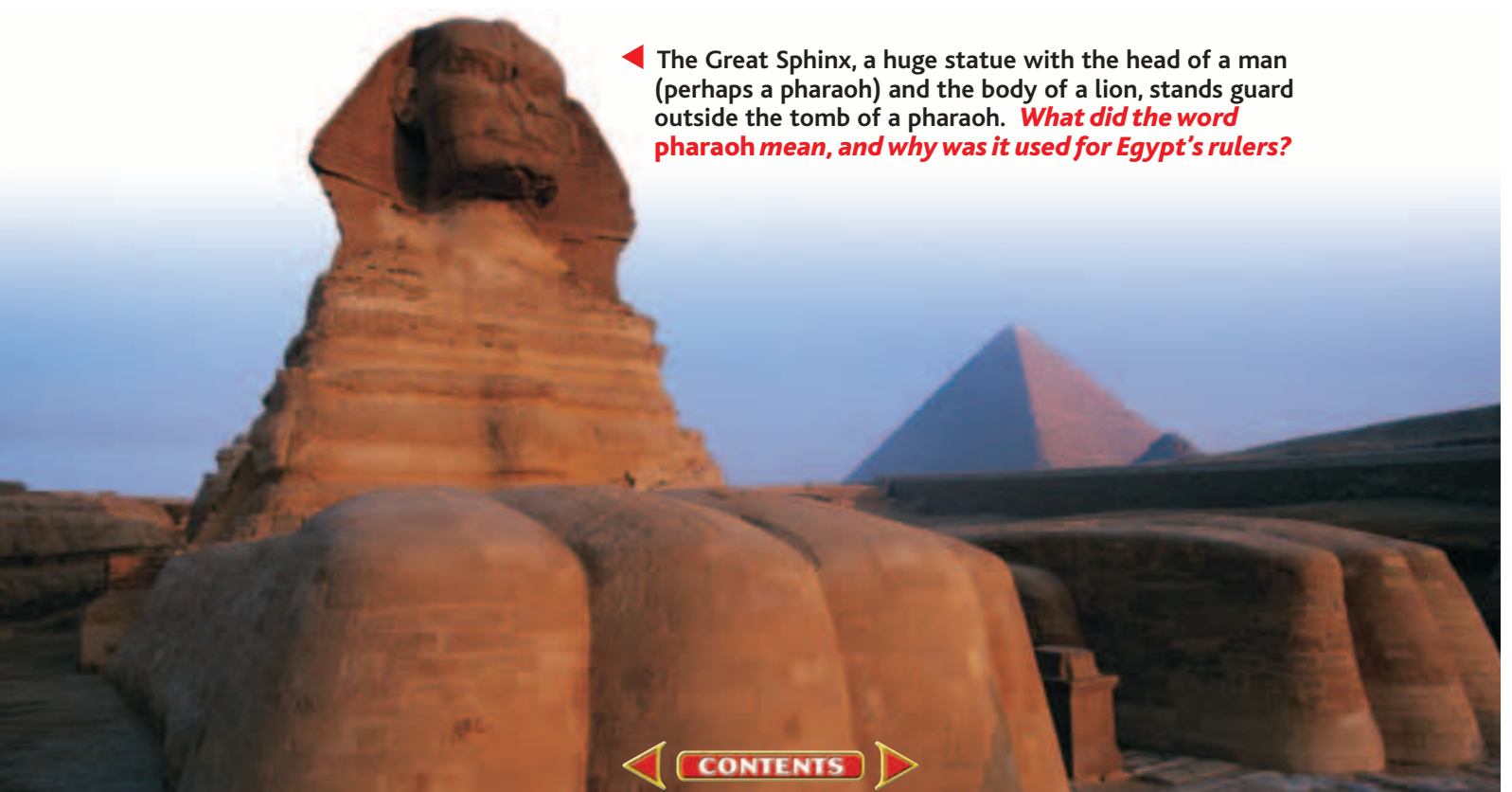
sure that crops were planted as the pharaoh directed. They also controlled trade and collected tax payments of grain from farmers.

Why did Egyptians willingly serve the pharaoh? One reason was that they believed the unity of the kingdom depended on a strong leader. Another was that they considered the pharaoh to be the son of Re (RAY), the Egyptian sun god. As a result, his subjects paid him the greatest respect. Whenever he appeared in public, people played music on flutes and cymbals. Bystanders along the road had to bow down and “smell the earth,” or touch their heads to the ground.

The Egyptians thought their pharaoh was a god on earth who controlled Egypt’s **welfare**. He carried out certain rituals that were thought to benefit the kingdom. For example, he drove a sacred bull around Memphis, the capital city. The Egyptians believed this ceremony would keep the soil rich and ensure good crops. The pharaoh was also the first to cut ripe grain. Egyptians believed this would bring a good harvest.

**Reading Check Analyze** Why did the pharaohs hold so much power?

◀ The Great Sphinx, a huge statue with the head of a man (perhaps a pharaoh) and the body of a lion, stands guard outside the tomb of a pharaoh. **What did the word pharaoh mean, and why was it used for Egypt’s rulers?**





## Egypt's Religion

**Main Idea** The Egyptians believed in many gods and goddesses and in life after death for the pharaohs.

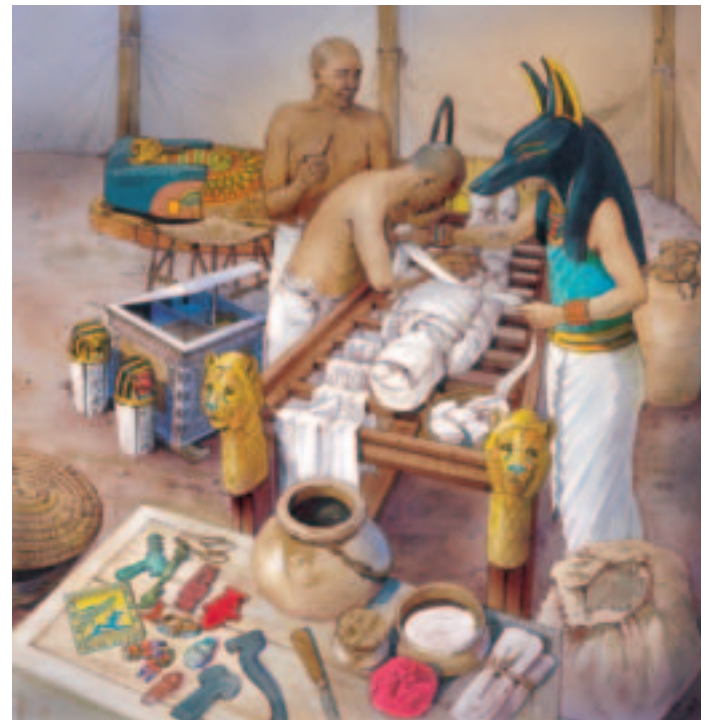
**Reading Connection** Have you seen mummies in horror movies? Maybe you've even wrapped yourself in strips of cloth to be a mummy for a costume party. Keep reading to find out how the ancient Egyptians made mummies, and why.

Religion was deeply woven into Egyptian culture. Like the people of Mesopotamia, the ancient Egyptians worshiped many **deities** (DEE•uh•teez), or gods and goddesses. The Egyptians believed these deities controlled the forces of nature and human activities.

The main Egyptian god was the sun god Re. This was probably because of Egypt's hot, sunny climate and the importance of the sun for good harvests. Another major god was Hapi (HAH•pee), who ruled the Nile River. The most important goddess was Isis (EYE•suhs). She represented the loyal wife and mother, and she ruled over the dead with her husband Osiris (oh•SY•ruhs).

**Life After Death** Unlike the Mesopotamians, who imagined a gloomy life after death, the Egyptians took a hopeful view. They believed that life in the next world would be even better than life on Earth. Following a long journey, the dead would reach a place of peace and plenty.

One of the most important manuscripts written in ancient Egypt was the *Book of the Dead*. This was a collection of spells and prayers that Egyptians studied to obtain life after death. They believed that the god Osiris would meet newcomers at the entrance to the next world. If they had led good lives and knew the magic spells, Osiris would grant them life after death.



▲ During the embalming process, the pharaoh's body was placed on a special table. The chief embalmer was dressed as Anubis, the god of mummification. **Why did the Egyptians embalm the pharaoh's body?**

For centuries, Egyptians believed that only the pharaohs and a special few people could enjoy the afterlife. They also believed that the pharaoh's spirit needed a body to make the journey to the afterlife. If the pharaoh's body decayed after death, his spirit would be forced to wander forever. It was vital that a pharaoh's spirit reach the next world. There, the pharaoh would continue to care for Egypt.

To protect the pharaoh's body, the Egyptians developed a process called **embalming** (ihm•BAHM•ihng). First, priests removed the body's organs. A special salt, natron, was then applied to the body, and it was stored for a number of days to dry. After this, the body was filled with spices and perfumes, then stitched closed. Next, it was cleaned with oils and tightly wrapped with



**WH6.2.3** Understand the relationship between religion and the social and political order in Mesopotamia and Egypt.  
**WH6.2.5** Discuss the main features of Egyptian art and architecture.

long strips of linen. The wrapped body was known as a **mummy** (MUH•mee). It was put in several wooden coffins, one fitting inside the other. The pharaoh was then ready for burial in a tomb.

**Egyptian Medicine** In the course of embalming the dead, the Egyptians learned much about the human body. Egyptian doctors used herbs and drugs to treat many different illnesses. They grew skilled at sewing up cuts and setting broken bones.

Some doctors focused on treating particular parts of the body, becoming the first specialists in medicine. Egyptians also wrote the world's first medical books using scrolls of papyrus.

**Reading Check Identify** Who were some of the Egyptians' main gods and goddesses?

## The Pyramids

**Main Idea** The Egyptians of the Old Kingdom built huge stone pyramids as tombs for their pharaohs.

**Reading Connection** Do you think the Statue of Liberty or the White House will still be standing in 4,000 years? The giant pyramids of Egypt have stood for about that long. Read to find out how and why they were built.

No ordinary tomb would do for a pharaoh of Egypt. Instead, the Egyptians built mountainlike **pyramids** (PIHR•uh•MIHDS) entirely of stone. These gigantic **structures**, the size of several city blocks, protected the bodies of dead pharaohs from floods, wild animals, and grave robbers. The pyramids also held supplies that the pharaoh might need in the spirit world, including clothing, furniture, jewelry, and food.

## Egypt's Religion

▼ Osiris



▲ In this painting, the god Osiris (seated at right) watches as other animal-headed gods weigh a dead man's soul and record the results. The scales have balanced, so the dead man may enter the underworld. **What was the Book of the Dead?**





**How Was a Pyramid Built?** It took thousands of people and years of backbreaking labor to build a pyramid. Most of the work was done by farmers during the Nile floods, when they could not tend their fields. In addition, surveyors, engineers, carpenters, and stonecutters lent their skills.

Each pyramid sat on a square base, with the entrance facing north. To determine true north, the Egyptians studied the heavens and developed **principles** of astronomy. With this knowledge, they invented a 365-day calendar with 12 months grouped into 3 seasons. This calendar became the basis for our modern calendar.

To determine the amount of stone needed for a pyramid, as well as the angles necessary

for the walls, the Egyptians made advances in mathematics. They invented a system of written numbers based on 10. They also created fractions, using them with whole numbers to add, subtract, and divide.

After the pyramid site was chosen, workers went wherever they could find stone—sometimes hundreds of miles away. Skilled artisans used copper tools to cut the stone into huge blocks. Other workers tied the blocks to wooden sleds and pulled them to the Nile over a path “paved” with logs. Next, they loaded the stones onto barges that transported them to the building site. There, workers unloaded the blocks and dragged or pushed them up ramps to be set in place.



## Inside a Pyramid

Ancient Egyptians buried their kings within large stone buildings called pyramids.

- 1 Air Shaft**
- 2 King's Burial Chamber** The king's mummified body was placed in a room at the pyramid's center.
- 3 Grand Gallery** This tall, sloping hall held large granite blocks that sealed the tomb.
- 4 Queen's Burial Chamber** This chamber held a statue of the king, not the queen's body.
- 5 Entrance**
- 6 Underground Burial Chamber** Sometimes kings were buried here instead.
- 7 Queen's Pyramids** These smaller pyramids are believed to be tombs for the king's wives.
- 8 Mastaba** These tombs surrounding the pyramids held royal family members and other nobles.
- 9 Valley Temple** This temple may have been used for rituals before the king was buried.



▲ The pyramid shown above is that of King Khafre, son of Khufu. Although it is smaller than the Great Pyramid, Khafre's pyramid was built on higher ground so as to appear taller. **About how tall is the Great Pyramid?**

**The Great Pyramid** About 2540 B.C., the Egyptians built the largest and grandest of the pyramids known as the Great Pyramid. It is located about 10 miles from the modern city of Cairo. This pyramid, built for **King Khufu** (KOO•foo), is one of three still standing in **Giza** (GEE•zuh) on the west bank of the Nile. It rises nearly 500 feet (153 m) above the desert, covers an area about the size of nine football fields, and contains more than 2 million stone blocks. Each block weighs an average of 2.5 tons.

The Great Pyramid was the tallest structure in the world for more than 4,000 years. It is equal to the size of a 48-story building and is the largest of about 80 pyramids found in Egypt. The Great Pyramid is truly a marvelous structure because the Egyptians built it without using beasts of burden, special tools, or even the wheel.

**Reading Check Explain** What was the purpose of pyramids?

### History Online

**Study Central** Need help with the Old Kingdom in Egypt? Visit [ca.hss.glencoe.com](http://ca.hss.glencoe.com) and click on Study Central.

## Section 2 Review

### Reading Summary

#### Review the Main Ideas

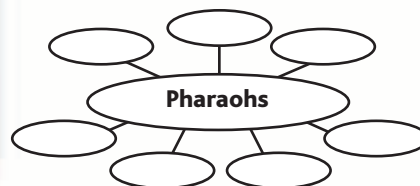
- The all-powerful rulers of Egypt, called pharaohs, were believed to be related to Egypt's main god.
- The Egyptians believed in many gods and goddesses. They also believed in life after death for the pharaoh, whose body would be mummified before burial.
- The pyramids, built as huge stone tombs for the pharaohs, required many years and thousands of workers to construct.

### What Did You Learn?

1. How was stone for a pyramid transported to the building site?
2. What did Egyptians learn from embalming bodies?
4. **Math Connection** How did the building of the pyramids lead to advances in science and mathematics? **CA HI.2.**

#### Critical Thinking

3. **Organize Information** Draw a diagram like the one below. Fill in details about the pharaohs of the Old Kingdom and their duties. **CA 6RC2.4**



5. **The Big Ideas** How did the Egyptians' religious beliefs compare to those of the Mesopotamians? **CA 6RC2.3**
6. **Persuasive Writing** Suppose you are an Egyptian pharaoh who wants a pyramid built to house your tomb. Write a letter to the farmers and workers in your kingdom explaining why it is their duty to build the pyramid for you. **CA 6WA2.5**



## THE EGYPTIAN CINDERELLA

By Shirley Climo

### Before You Read

**The Scene:** This story takes place in ancient Egypt, along the Nile River. It occurs during the time of the Pharaoh Amasis, about 550 B.C.

**The Characters:** Rhodopis is a Greek girl who is enslaved by an Egyptian man. There are three servant girls who work with her. Amasis is the pharaoh of Egypt.

**The Plot:** The Pharaoh announces that he will hold court for all of his subjects. The rest of the servant girls get to go, but Rhodopis is left behind.

### Vocabulary Preview

**snatched:** to grab something quickly

**bidding:** an order

**gilded:** covered with or containing gold

**sash:** a band of fabric worn around the waist or over the shoulder

**tunic:** a knee-length piece of clothing that is usually tied up with a belt

**din:** a loud, confused mixture of noise

**rushes:** plants that are found in or near water

**H**ave you ever felt unappreciated or ignored? In this story, a girl who is normally taken for granted learns to overcome the bad way others treat her.





## As You Read

*Many different areas of the world have their own version of the Cinderella story. This tale from ancient Egypt uses the main ideas of the story and combines them with Egyptian history. Many of the characters in this tale were based on real people who lived in Egypt thousands of years ago. How does this version of the story differ from the one you know?*



**L**ong ago in the land of Egypt where the green Nile River widens to meet the blue sea, there lived a maiden called Rhodopis. When she was still a small child, Rhodopis had been stolen by pirates. She was snatched from her home in Greece, taken across the sea to Egypt and there sold as a slave.

Like the Egyptian servant girls, Rhodopis went to the water's edge each day to wash clothes or to gather the reeds that grew along the riverbank. But Rhodopis looked different from the Egyptian girls. Their eyes were brown and hers were green. Their hair hung straight to their shoulders, while the breeze blew hers into tangles. Their skin glowed like copper, but her pale skin burned red beneath the sun. That was how she got her name, for Rhodopis meant "rosy-cheeked" in Greek. . . .







Although her master was kind, he was old and liked to doze beneath a fig tree. He seldom heard the servant girls tease Rhodopis. He never saw them ordering her about. . . .

Rhodopis found friends among the animals instead. Birds ate crumbs from her hands. She coaxed a monkey to sit upon her shoulder and charmed a hippopotamus with her songs. It would raise its huge head from the muddy water and prick its small ears to listen.

Sometimes, when her chores were done and the day had cooled, Rhodopis would dance for her animal companions. She twirled so light that her tiny bare feet scarcely touched the ground. One evening her master awakened to see her dance.

“No goddess is more nimble!” he called out. “Such a gift deserves reward.” He tugged his chin whiskers, thinking, and then declared, “You shall go barefoot no longer.”

Her master ordered a pair of dainty slippers made especially for Rhodopis. The soles were of real leather, and the toes were gilded with rose-red gold. Now when Rhodopis danced, her feet sparkled like fireflies.

The rose-red slippers set Rhodopis more apart than ever. The Egyptian servant girls were jealous, for they wore clumsy sandals woven from papyrus.<sup>1</sup> Out of spite they found new tasks for her to do, keeping Rhodopis so busy that she was too tired to dance at night.

One evening, Kipa, who was chief among the servant girls, announced, “Tomorrow we sail for Memphis to see the Pharaoh. His Majesty is going to hold court for all his subjects.”

“There will be musicians and dancing,” said another servant girl, eyeing the rose-red slippers.

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<sup>1</sup>**papyrus:** a plant that grows by the Nile River





“There will be feasting,” added a third.

“Poor Rhodopis! You must stay behind,” Kipa jeered. “You have linen to wash and grain to grind and the garden to weed.”

The next morning, just as Ra<sup>2</sup> the Sun was climbing into the sky, Rhodopis followed the servant girls to the riverbank. . . . Perhaps they will let me come along to see the Pharaoh after all, she thought. But the three servant girls poled their raft around the bend in the river without giving Rhodopis a backward glance.

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<sup>2</sup>Ra: the ancient Egyptian sun god, also known as Re.



Rhodopis sighed, and turned to the basket piled high with dirty clothes. “Wash the linen, weed the garden, grind the grain.” She slapped the wooden paddle against the cloth in time to her song.

The hippopotamus, tired of so dull a tune, pushed out of the reeds and splashed into the river.

“Shame!” cried Rhodopis, shaking her paddle. “You splattered mud on my beautiful slippers!”

She polished the shoes on the hem of her tunic until the rosy gold glittered in the sun. Then she carefully put them on the bank behind her.

“Wash the linen, weed the garden . . . ” Rhodopis began again, when suddenly a shadow fell on the water. Rhodopis jumped up. A great falcon, the symbol of the god Horus,<sup>3</sup> circled in the sky with wings spread so wide that they blotted out the sun.

“Greetings to you, Proud Horus,” Rhodopis murmured. She bowed her head and felt a rush of air on the back of her neck.

When Rhodopis dared to lift her eyes, she saw the falcon soar away. Dangling from his talons was one of her beautiful slippers. “Stop!” she pleaded. “Come back!”

But the bird did not heed her. He flew toward the sun until he was no more than a dark speck against the gold. . . .

After Rhodopis had lost sight of the falcon, the mighty bird followed the course of the Nile to the city of Memphis, to the square where the Pharaoh was

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<sup>3</sup>Horus: the falcon-headed god of ancient Egypt



holding court. There the falcon watched and waited.

The Pharaoh's name was Amasis.<sup>4</sup> On his head he wore the red-and-white crown of the Two Egypts.<sup>5</sup> The double crown was heavy and pinched his ears. He preferred driving his chariot fast as the wind to sitting on the throne. Amasis yawned.

At that very moment, the falcon dropped the rose-red slipper into his lap.

The slipper was so bright that Amasis thought it was a scrap of the sun. Then he saw the falcon wheeling overhead.

"The god Horus sends me a sign!" exclaimed the Pharaoh. He picked up the rose-red slipper. "Every maiden in Egypt must try this shoe! She whose foot it fits shall be my queen. That is the will of the gods."

Amasis dismissed the court, called for his chariot, and began his search at once. . . .

The Pharaoh journeyed to distant cities, he tracked the desert where pyramids tower over the sand, and he climbed the steep cliffs where falcons nest. The rose-red slipper was always in his hand. Wherever he went, women and girls, rich or poor, flocked to try on this slipper. But none could fit into so small a shoe.

The longer Amasis searched, the more determined he became to marry the maiden who had lost the tiny slipper. He

summoned his royal barge and vowed to visit every landing along the Nile. The barge was hung with sails of silk. Trumpets blared and oarsmen rowed to the beat of gongs. The din was so dreadful that when the barge rounded the bend in the river, Rhodopis fled in alarm. But the servant girls ran to the water's edge. . . .

Amasis held up the rose-red slipper. "Whoever can wear this shoe shall be my queen."

The servant girls knew that shoe, and knew its owner, too. Yet they clapped their hands over their mouths and said nothing. If one of them could wear it . . .

First Kipa, then the others, tried to put on the slipper. Each cramped her foot and curled her toes and squeezed until tears ran down her cheeks. Still her heel hung over.



<sup>4</sup>**Amasis:** pharaoh of Egypt from 570–526 B.C.

<sup>5</sup>**red-and-white crown of the Two Egypts:** a crown worn to symbolize Egypt's unity



“Enough!” said Amasis wearily. He would have set sail again had he not chanced to see Rhodopis peering through the rushes.

“Come!” he commanded. “You must try this rose-red slipper.”

The servant girls gawked openmouthed as the Pharaoh kneeled before Rhodopis. He slipped the tiny shoe on her foot with ease. Then Rhodopis pulled its mate from the folds of her tunic.

“Behold!” cried Amasis. “In all this land there is none so fit to be queen!”

“But Rhodopis is a slave!” protested one of the servant girls.

Kipa sniffed. “She is not even Egyptian.”

“She is the most Egyptian of all,” the Pharaoh declared. “For her eyes are as green as the Nile, her hair as feathery as papyrus, and her skin the pink of a lotus flower.”

The Pharaoh led Rhodopis to the royal barge, and with every step, her rose-red slippers winked and sparkled in the sun.



## Responding to the Literature

1. What does Rhodopis receive as a gift from her master?
2. Which god does Amasis think is sending him a sign?
3. **Drawing Conclusions** In what ways does the fact that Rhodopis is actually a Greek affect the story? Why do you think this is so? **CA 6RL3.2**
4. **Analyze** How does the author use the setting to advance the action of the story? **CA 6RL3.3**
5. **Read to Write** Pretend that you are Rhodopis. What might you have done if it had been your slipper that was taken? Write two to three paragraphs explaining what you would have done to get the slipper back. **CA 6WS1.2**